

APPLICATION, CONFIGURATION AND GRATIFICATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

¹Omodu, Ibitrokoemi Esther, ²Amadi. Richard Nlemany, ³Nsereka, Barigbon Gbara &
Dr. Dike, Harcourt Whyte

¹Department of Mass Communication, ²Department of Public Relations and Advertising
³Department of Journalism and Media Studies, ⁴Department of Cinematography and Broadcast
and Media Studies, ^{1,2,3&4}Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Email: Emi.omodu@ust.edu.org, Amadi.richard@ust.edu.org, Barigbon nsereka@ust.edu.org, harcour.dike@ust.edu.org

ABSTRACT

The study investigated application, configuration and gratifications in social media advertising. The main objective was to examine how businesses use social media for advertising and the gratifications derived. The study was guided by the uses and gratifications theory. Using a quantitative methodology, the survey method was adopted. The population of the study comprised 5,069 registered businesses registered in Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States, and 18,092,300 residents of the States. The sample comprised 371 registered businesses in the states, and 391 residents of the States. The researcher used the multistage cluster sampling technique to identify the respondents that provided information for the study. The instrument used in collecting data was questionnaire. Data collected were presented using frequency distribution tables and analysed using simple percentage and weighted mean score (WMS). Findings of the study showed that the gratifications derived from social media advertising by small and medium scale businesses are that it increases business visibility, improves brand awareness, improves audience engagement, improves relationship-building, and get customer insights of product. The study concluded that social media platforms used for advertising by the businesses in South-South, Nigeria offers effective interactive tools useful to interface with customers using innovative techniques to connect businesses to consumers. The study recommended that business owners should of the leverage the advantages and peculiarities of the different social media platforms and create engaging advertising content to keep their followers interested.

Keywords: Social media, advertising, application, configuration, gratifications

INTRODUCTION

The debates on the dimensions and applications of social media in our daily lives have continued to evolve, unveiling the essence and dangers of social media functionality. This functionality continues to evolve as platforms are updated regularly such that the knowledge about the essence and dangers of social media keeps changing. These changes continue to take the form of application updates and interface adjustment, thereby making the social media a fluid media with constant adjustments to suit trends.

The rise of social media has undoubtedly altered the landscape of business promotion, particularly by blurring the lines between public relations, marketing, and advertising (Scott, 2015). Social media advertising is an amalgamation of iterative processes intertwined to energize advertisers' strategic input, public relations efforts, offline strategies (including point-of-purchase), mobile tactics, and most importantly, use of approaches that build on the organic nature of social media content while the traditional advertising model typically applies a linear progression from ideation, strategic thinking, execution, and evaluation (Alhabash, Mundel & Hussain, 2019). Due to the great priority given to understanding how customers interact, react, and produce online materials that complements or modifies an existing advertising plan, social media emphasize the significance of the human component (Alhabash, Mundel & Hussain, 2019). According to Hoelzel (2014), social media advertisers are confronted with some challenges as social media advertising expenditure rapidly and exponentially rises, valued at \$8.5 billion in 2014 and predicted to reach \$14 billion by 2018. The first challenge is how marketers can first produce sincere, distinctive, and viral experiences that influence consumers' attention, engagement, and

hopefully purchasing behavior. Secondly, how can businesses measure the Return on Investment (RoI) of their social media advertising or, to put it another way, how should marketers rethink the RoI of social media advertising with all of its nuances, complexities, and intricacies (Alhabash, Mundel & Hussain, 2019).

Rather than viewing and accessing information, users of the social media can also share, interact with, and create multimodal materials that are transmitted privately, semi-privately, and publicly through networks of friends, followers, and users (Scott, 2015). Online content that are intended to persuade is referred to as social media advertising. They include contents that are accessible online and instigate users access, share, interact with, contribute to, and co-create. Paid, owned, and earned media can all be used for social media advertising (Hurrell & Postatny, 2015).

One advantage social media has over other media of communication is its reach which makes social media advertising penetrative. With the increasing number of phone users and the desire for humans to interact and bond with each other, this reach will continue to be boundless, creating a suitable room for advertisers to explore. The use of cookies and other data extracting avenues makes it relatively easier for advertisers to target their messages to specific audiences based on the information gathered.

Data metrics supplies organizations with valuable insights on the responses from their customers. The reach of a social media message is what determines the success of that post or message. This message reaches the primary stage of advertising which drives the second stage of decision and action from the customers. The more people are reached by an advertisement, the greater the chance of patronage but the greater task is in the creative nature of the advertisement (Indeed Career Guide, 2022). Aside from the contents of the product or service being advertised, the creativity of the is a major determinant of the product sales. Social media offers a lot of tools and applications that make advertisement interesting. According to Sheun (2008), social media applications have enough tools that can persuade buyers to acquire some products than the other media. However, advertisers need to be proficient with the use of the tools for the benefits to be maximized.

Statement of the Problem

Business ventures use social media advertisement for different purposes but the end target is usually for profitability through enhanced sales. They use social media as a tool to generate brand awareness, promote content, engage with customers, generate leads, perform market research, analyse competitors, gain insights on their audiences, or collaborate with influencers. These businesses can leverage social media advertising for growth in many ways, from building the brand to engaging with customers.

However, despite the numerous advantages derived in social media advertising, there are a plethora of issues faced in its usage. For instance, a lot of customers have complained about not getting exactly what they ordered as they had seen in advertisements on social media. This situation made many customers to make posts of 'What they ordered vs. what they got', which has become a trend in the social media space. Also, some business owners do not fully understand how to leverage on the social media marketing to engage customers. There are organizations struggling to find ways to effectively connect with customers. While it can be said that the major duty of advertising is to reach out to a wide range of audiences on the gains of a product, its main purpose is achieved when the advertiser makes financial or business gains as a result of the advertisements. However, how business ventures, especially small and medium scale businesses, use the social media platforms in the South-South, Nigeria has not been ascertained. This study will examine how businesses use social media for advertising and the gratifications derived.

Objectives of the Study

1. ascertain the types of social media platforms commonly used for advertising by businesses in South-South, Nigeria
2. Determine the gratifications derived from social media advertising by small and medium scale businesses in the South-South, Nigeria
3. Find out the perception of advertisers on the usefulness of social media configurations for advertising

Research Questions

1. What are the types of social media platforms commonly used for advertising by businesses in South-South, Nigeria?
2. What are the gratifications derived from social media advertising by small and medium scale businesses in the south-south?
3. What is the perception of advertisers on the usefulness of social media configurations for advertising?

Theoretical Review**Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Uses and gratifications theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. The theory purports that people use certain media based on the gratification they derive from it. The uses and gratification theory discusses the effects of the media on people. It explains how people use the media for their own need and get satisfied when their needs are fulfilled. In other words, it can be said that the theory argues what people do with media rather than what media does to people. Studies have described the theory as the gratifications or benefits that attract and hold audiences to diverse types of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological demands (Edwards, 1998).

The theory as a mass communication theory has been applied to traditional media to understand customer behaviour. It explained the origin of social and psychological needs that generated expectations of the media, thus created different patterns of media exposure or involvement in other activities that lead to satisfaction of needs. The uses and gratifications theory is basically of the view that the use of social media positively influence the performance gains that helped to explain why people choose and respond to different types of media and information when faced with numerous media and messaging options. In other words, the primary tenet of the uses and gratification theory is that social media use favorably influences the performance improvements that explain why people select and react to various media and information when presented with a variety of media and messaging options. According to the theory, people will seek out media among competitors that fulfil their needs and this leads to ultimate gratifications. The uses and gratification theory directly place power in the hands of the users. The theory is based on the idea that media audiences are active rather than passive, meaning they do not only receive information, but also unconsciously attempt to make sense of the message in their own context (Harwood, 1999).

Uses and gratifications theory asserts that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs. Unlike many media theories that view media users as passive, uses and gratifications sees users as active agents who have control over their media consumption. The central idea of the theory is that people seek gratifications from their exposures so they continuously select those media options that have the strongest expectations for gratification (Edwards, 1998). Thus, this explanation with social media usage assumes that social media users are aware of their needs and that they are rational in using the media to satisfy their needs.

The implication of the uses and gratifications theory to this study is that business ventures use social media to fulfil different gratifications and this has a multiplier effect on the outcome of their businesses. This means that they can choose from a variety of social media platforms which tends to fulfil their business needs. It also helps businesses understand that consumers actively choose the content they consume on social media and that successful advertising should align with and fulfil those choices and needs. This approach can lead to more effective social media campaigns and improved customer engagement.

Literature Review

The presence of internet-based social media has made it possible for an individual to be able to, at his or her convenience, communicate with hundreds to thousands of people across the globe. Advertising on the Internet began in the middle of the 1990's, in the form of banner advertisements that appeared on commercial websites (Zeff & Aronson, 1999, cited in Ma & Noichangkid, 2011). Nowadays, even though

there are numerous different new contents, types or appearances of advertising popping out on the Internet, the majority advertising on the Internet is still in the forms of banners. The domination of banner ads on web advertising makes them as a standard advertising format on the Internet (Cho, Lee & Tharp, 2001). People will be redirected to the advertisement pages by clicking the banners. This banner ads clicking are believed to be the first advertising that created interactivity through the Internet (Shamdasani, Stanaland, & Tan, 2001 cited in Ma & Noichangkid, 2011). In the digital age, the Internet has become the ultimate marketplace, connecting businesses with consumers from every corner of the globe. Internet advertising, a cornerstone of online business, has evolved into a multifaceted and diverse field, offering a plethora of opportunities for brands to reach their audience in innovative and effective ways.

Internet advertising, also known as online advertising or digital advertising, refers to the use of the Internet as a medium to promote products, services, or brands to a wide audience. It encompasses a variety of formats, including display ads, search engine marketing (SEM), social media advertising, email marketing, content marketing, and affiliate marketing. The goal is to drive consumer action, whether it be making a purchase, signing up for a service, or engaging with a brand. In recent times, Internet advertising has evolved to incorporate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data analytics, enabling advertisers to create highly targeted and personalized campaigns. Programmatic advertising, influencer marketing, and video advertising are some of the prominent trends shaping the landscape of online advertising.

The principal reason why organizations and advertisers promote their items through Internet advertising is to have an effect on the purchasing conduct of the consumer. However, “brand impact is either changed or strengthened frequently through people’s memories. Memories about the brand are formed by associations that are related to brand name in consumer mind” (Niazi, Siddiqui, Shah & Hunjra, 2012, p.32). These brands are continually impacting on consumer thinking, assessment and final purchases. The purchasing behaviour of the consumer has for quite a while been given such a lot of significance and space literature uncovering the effect of advertising and with respect to its adequacy. Now and again consumer purchasing conduct relies upon whether the customer likes or dislikes the advert of a product (Smith, Meurs & Neijens, 2006). An advertisement that is well done having a good quality is very likely to influence the consumers to buy the product while an advertisement with a poor quality will rarely have such effect.

Social media advertising is a form of Internet advertising that is done using social media applications. While Internet advertising includes all the paid promotions done on the internet (including emails and interacting platforms), social media advertising deals specifically with social media applications and its users. Social media has over the years exploded as a brand of online discussion where people create content, share it, bookmark it and network at greater rate. Importantly, through the use of social media platforms, one is able to present one's products to different communities of individuals with keen interests in the product.

Small businesses are constantly trying to find new ways to gain exposure and improve their marketing plans. While some business owners may still be resistant to the idea, statistics prove that consumers are on social media, making it a great space to increase brand awareness and promote content. According to Statista, there are more than 5 billion active social media users worldwide in 2024 and that number is expected to increase to nearly 6 billion by 2027. According to Arsath (2018), social media includes a variety of applications that allows consumers or customers to post, tag, blog, dig, etc. Social media advertising is a new trend and rapidly growing way in which businesses are reaching out to targeted customers easily. By encouraging users to spread messages to personal contacts, social media advertising has injected a new term of high dissemination and trust to mass communication and mass advertising (Arsath, 2018, p. 152). With the development of new media tools especially for advertising, social media advertisers and marketers are now better equipped to effectively reach their target audience (customers/consumers) through social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Arsath (2018) also noted that there are numerous different social media sites which take several different forms and

contain different features. However, it can be argued that the most common social networking platform that first come to mind is Facebook. Facebook, which was launched in February 2004, owned and operated by Facebook, Inc., is said to have over 900 million active users internationally as at May 2012. Facebook is primarily a tool to stay in touch with friends and family, the connections it has can be ideal for business ventures. According to Statista (2020), Facebook presently has more than 1 billion registered accounts and more than 2.7 billion active users per month. The most people have used this social media platform. Facebook has indeed been declared the world's largest media firm based on these figures (Gul & Euchner, 2019). Facebook is the largest monitoring organization in the world in terms of data generation (Schneier, 2019). Facebook offers the lengthiest display name field in terms of the allowable number of characters for display names (Li *et al.*, 2018).

Watson cited in Sheth and Sharma (2005) says that with the popularity of digital marketing on the rise, several businesses are investigating how social media can help them promote their products and services to potential and existing customers. Social networking sites like Facebook and X (Formerly Twitter) have transformed the way some businesses think about advertising. While some businesses direct their customers towards their social network pages, others direct their customers towards their websites. Primarily, the basic advantages of social media advertising are that it reduces costs and enhances customer/consumer reach. This is because the cost of a social media platform is typically lower than other advertising platforms such as face-to-face sales, people or middlemen, or distributors (Arsath, 2018). Also, social media advertising allows businesses or firms to reach customers that may not be accessible due to temporal and locational barriers of already existing distribution channels. As observed by Ameer (2016) cited in Arsath 2018, p.153), social media platforms increase reach and costs by providing three areas of advantage for customers.

First, Ameer (2016) argued that an advertising firm can provide information to customers without any form of human intervention hence information can be provided in a form that customers can easily process and understand. Secondly, social media advertising firms can create interactions by customizing information for individual customers that allow customers to design products and services that meet their specific requirements. Finally, Ameer (2016) posits that social media platforms can allow transactions between customers and firms that would typically require human contact as in the case of successful firms such as Amazon.com etc. (Ameer, 2016, cited in Arsath, 2018).

It is important to aver that customer perception in relation to a particular product being advertised is of immense importance to advertisers as it reveals customer's acceptance, satisfaction or rejection as well as general feedback of the product being advertised via social media. This enables advertisers to review the product and also seek ways to improve where necessary. Furthermore, Szabo (2011) particularly explained that the business bound in social media has no walls, hence, social media advertising can strategically position a business to reach wider array of audience anywhere and everywhere in the world (Szabo, 2011 cited in Ekwueme, Attah & Okoro, 2018). In summary, advertising via social media platforms increases sales, enables customers' feedback and is cost-effective (comparatively low cost) compared to traditional media.

Social media is no longer a place to connect and socialize with friends and family. Social media recommendations can sell products and services, for instance, generating 88 percent of consumer purchases, according to Gitnux. Data from Meta also shows that 83 percent of Instagram users say they discover new brands while using the platform. Those users are then able to share posts with friends, increasing brand awareness further. Social media platforms allow small businesses to drive traffic to their website. For instance, on Instagram, you can post the URL to your website in your account bio and direct users to this link via a post on your feed or story. Giving users a taste of what your business has to offer through posts on your feed will intrigue consumers to want to know more about your brand.

Since there are multiple popular social platforms, that translates into more ways for small businesses to promote content. Whether they favor Instagram stories or Facebook Messenger, businesses have options to express their creative side and showcase their expertise. For example, providing stats and fun facts about the products you are selling or services that you are providing can prove to viewers your business is worth taking a chance on. When it comes to small businesses or any business, it's better to have too

many than too few methods for communicating with your customer base. Mailing addresses, phone calls, email and contact forms on websites are all helpful, but if the customer has a quick question to ask or wants to share the good news about their order arriving earlier than anticipated, they tend to do this through platforms like Twitter and Instagram. The real-time advantages of social platforms allow your business to engage with your customers promptly. You don't have to be on every platform, but it's helpful to have a few active accounts where you know your customers can be found. While a small business should not copy every move that their competition makes, they should be mindful of where their competitors are at and what they're up to. If your competition engages its customers actively through social media, they have the advantage of being able to boast about that presence.

Simply by having active social media profiles, you're doing your business a favor and increasing its visibility through search result pages. As mentioned earlier, you don't need to plaster your business on every social platform — Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, YouTube — to show that you're active. CNBC reports that sites like Instagram and WhatsApp continue to remain popular with their user base. Go to the sites where your brand's voice will be at its strongest and able to engage with customers while still getting its overall message across.

An advertisement that must be adequately viable to attract the customer's attention, including other target consumers so as to achieve its goals. Explicit goals ought to be considered when setting every advertisement campaign. The aim of an advertising message ought to be explicit. This involves that the target consumers should be explicitly distinguished thus that the impact which advertising means to accomplish will be plainly indicated. Businesses use persuasive methods in one-on-one advert settings and through traditional media channels, like the radio, print media and the television. (Basu, 2019).

Measuring marketing effectiveness is crucial for any business looking to maximize their ROI and understand the impact of their marketing strategies. Measurement of advertising effectiveness provides vital insights to inform future advertising budget spend and allows brands to understand the strengths and weaknesses of any campaign. However, several challenges can complicate this process. There are many challenges to measuring marketing effectiveness. Factors include the type of data available for each channel, the frequency of data available, the different types of methodology used in various attribution and incrementality models, and more.

The type, richness, and quality of data vary widely from channel to channel. For example, with programmatic display advertising, marketers can get user-level and impression-level data to track the user all the way to a conversion, regardless of whether a conversion occurs or not. However, on TV, marketers would only get reports of when their ads were flighted on air. On Facebook, marketers collect rich aggregate data reporting about their targeted audience but can obtain almost no user-level data. Another issue is the frequency of data. Some media channels offer data on a real-time basis, whereas others only offer data post-campaign, and reporting may only be delivered weekly or monthly. As the customer journey becomes more complex, it becomes longer and more difficult to track. Gone are the days of users clicking on your website and converting; with multiple touchpoints and user journeys, there is now much more data for a marketer to track.

Empirical Review

Rahim and Aziz (2023) conducted a study on 'Use of Social Media for Advertising and Its Effectiveness'. The goal of the study was to examine the various social media platforms that are utilised for advertising. The study employed the quantitative technique. Questionnaires were distributed to 120 respondents who work for Berjaya Starbucks Coffee, and data were gathered using quantitative methods. The findings showed that social media is a well-liked and successful medium for advertising among consumers due to how quickly and cheaply advertising can be done. The study concluded that advertising on social media is very successful. Social media platforms serve two distinct purposes: for image sharing, and for social networking. However, both are incredibly successful in promoting goods.

Godwin (2019) conducted research on 'An Empirical Analysis on Effect of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behavior'. The researcher was of the opinion that digital age and rise of online shopping have driven an unprecedented business model shift from product manufacturer and retailer.

Digital marketing and advertising have been built in a way that allows you to easily measure return on investment. The aims of this study were to examine the various digital (social) media platform in Nigeria that could influence costumer behavior; identify the categories of products that consumers buy on digital media platform; and analyse the influence of digital marketing on consumer behaviour. The study adopted a survey method. Findings of the study showed that the categories of products that consumers buy on digital channels include convenience product, shopping product and specialty product. The study recommended that purchasing via digital channels is driven by the growth in the E-commerce industries and the number of digital consumers.

Alashe (2021) embarked on the research entitled 'Influence of Social Media and Marketing on Corporate Performance of Financial Institutes: An Analysis on Selected Companies in Nigeria'. The study posits that social media and marketing have a more influence on the sustainability and performance of financial institutions. Technological advancements, growing marketing environment competitions, globalization, economic changes, vigorous customer purchasing behaviour and dynamic environment has evolved a proportional change to the way wherein corporations speak with current and expected clients. The researcher employed the use of secondary data which encompasses the use of books, journal, newspaper and the internet. The findings showed that social media has had a very significant effect on marketing expenditure. It concluded that digital or social media platforms is increasingly affecting and changing our daily businesses and also social media provides an interactive channel between the brand and the costumer and also create room for suggestion. This study recommended that the number of social media users is increasing on a daily basis, therefore, financial institutions should give priority to social media applications that can enable young users to follow easily.

Majinda (2019) embarked on a study on 'Predicting Intention and Use of Social Media Marketing: Application of The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Usage of Technology Framework'. This study posits that the rapid advancements in Information Communication Technology (ICT) played a catalytic role in the evolution of marketing communications transitioning from a traditional approach to a digital marketing approach. One of the objectives of this study is that it focuses on the application of a modified version of the unified theory of acceptance and usage of technology framework. Primary data was employed in this research and a close ended questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings of this study showed that performance expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions all have a crucial positive effect in their relationship with expectation to use Facebook marketing. The study recommends that to improve the frequency level of marketing which will extend the comfort level of Facebook usage.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the descriptive survey method. The population of the study comprised 5,069 businesses registered in Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States in South-South Nigeria, and 18,092,300 residents of Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Delta States in South-South Nigeria. The sample for the study comprised 371 registered businesses in the aforementioned states, and 391 residents of the South-South States. The researcher used the multistage cluster sampling technique to identify the respondents that provided information for the study. The researcher used two separate questionnaire set designed for the owners of the registered businesses and the residents of the various South-South states. Data collected were presented using frequency distribution tables and analysed using simple percentage and weighted mean score (WMS).

DATA PRESENTATION

FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE SET

Table 1.1: Social media platforms respondents prefer to use advertising their business

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Facebook	151	41.8
2	X	31	8.6
3	WhatsApp	103	28.5

4	TikTok	5	1.4
5	Instagram	71	19.7
	Total	361	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.1 shows that majority of the respondents prefer to use Facebook in advertising their business which is represented with a frequency of 151 at 41.8%. This is followed by WhatsApp with a frequency of 103 at 28.5%.

Table 1.2: Extent to which respondents advertise their products on social media using photos

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	286	79.2
2	Moderate	51	14.1
3	Low extent	15	4.1
4	Can't tell	9	2.5
	Total	361	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.2 shows that majority of the respondents advertise their products on social media using photos at a high extent with a frequency of 286 (79.2%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 51 (14.1%).

Table 1.3: Extent to which respondents advertise their products on social media using videos

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	321	89
2	Moderate	23	6.4
3	Low extent	11	3
4	Can't tell	6	1.7
	Total	361	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.3 shows that majority of the respondents advertise their products on social media using videos at a high extent with a frequency of 321 (89%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 23 (6.4%).

Table 1.4: Extent to which respondents advertise their products on social media using live videos

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	83	23
2	Moderate	102	28.2
3	Low extent	168	46.5
4	Can't tell	8	2.2
	Total	361	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.4 shows that majority of the respondents advertise their products on social media using live videos at a low extent with a frequency of 168 (46.5%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 102 (28.2%).

Table 1.5: Extent to which respondents advertise their products on social media using text and stories

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	314	87
2	Moderate	33	9.1
3	Low extent	11	3
4	Can't tell	3	0.8

Total 361 100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.5 shows that majority of the respondents advertise their products on social media using text and stories at a high extent with a frequency of 314 (87%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 33 (9.1%).

Table 1.6: Gratifications derived from social media advertising

S/N	Gratifications	SA	A	D	SD	Total	WMS	Decision
1	Increases business visibility	323	32	6	-	361	3.73	Agreed
2	Improves brand awareness	273	63	21	4	361	3.63	Agreed
3	Improves audience engagement	281	45	32	3	361	4.5	Agreed
4	Improves content distribution	63	79	136	83	361	2.1	Disagreed
5	Improves relationship-building	217	72	67	5	361	3.21	Agreed
6	Get customer insights of product	285	47	23	6	361	3.41	Agreed

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.6 shows the gratifications derived from social media advertising. From the weighted mean score provided, the highest score for the gratifications derived is that social media advertising increases business visibility of which the decision is Agreed. With a weighted mean score of 2.1 it is however, disagreed that disagreed that social media advertising improves content distribution.

Table 1.7: Perception on usefulness of social media configurations for advertising

S/N	Perception on usefulness of social media configurations	SA	A	D	SD	Total	WMS	Decision
1	Ease audience engagement on the platform	201	96	43	21	361	3.15	Agreed
2	Enable personalization my business page	195	82	49	35	361	2.99	Agreed
3	Target specific customers and groups	222	122	11	6	361	3.47	Agreed
4	Measure and assess audience engagement	151	122	78	10	361	3.03	Agreed

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 1.7 shows the perception of business owners on usefulness of social media configurations for advertising. From the weighted mean score provided, the highest score is the usefulness for targeting specific customers and groups of which the decision is Agreed. This is followed by the ease audience engagement on the platform which is also Agreed.

SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE SET

Table 2.1: Extent to which respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on Facebook

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	307	85
2	Moderate	32	8.9

3	Low extent	15	4.2
4	Can't tell	7	1.9
	Total	375	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2.1 shows that majority of the respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on Facebook at a high extent with a frequency of 307 (85%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 32 (8.9%).

Table 2.2: Extent to which respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on X

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	44	11.7
2	Moderate	65	17.3
3	Low extent	256	68.2
4	Can't tell	10	2.7
	Total	375	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2.2 shows that majority of the respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on X at a low extent with a frequency of 256 (68.2%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 65 (17.3%).

Table 2.3: Extent to which respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on WhatsApp

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	218	58.1
2	Moderate	75	20
3	Low extent	56	14.9
4	Can't tell	26	6.9
	Total	375	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2.3 shows that majority of the respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on WhatsApp at a high extent with a frequency of 218 (58.1%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 75 (20%).

Table 2.4: Extent to which respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on TikTok

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	48	12.8
2	Moderate	78	20.8
3	Low extent	243	64.8
4	Can't tell	6	1.6
	Total	375	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2.4 shows that majority of the respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on TikTok at a low extent with a frequency of 243 (64.8%). This is followed by a moderate extent with a frequency of 78 (20.8%).

Table 2.5: Extent to which respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on Instagram

S/N	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	High extent	123	32.8
2	Moderate	188	50.1

3	Low extent	44	11.7
4	Can't tell	6	1.6
	Total	375	100

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2.5 shows that majority of the respondents come across advertisement from business ventures on Instagram at a moderate extent with a frequency of 188 (50.1%). This is followed by a high extent with a frequency of 123 (32.8%).

Table 2.6 Gratifications derived from social media advertising

S/N	Gratification	SA	A	D	SD	Total	WMS	Decision
1	Provides relevant update on products to customer	141	113	63	44	375	2.8	Agree
2	Get access to a broad range of products difficult to search for from physical stores	116	175	47	23	375	2.96	Agree
3	Assures customers of product standard and authenticity	36	48	125	166	375	1.6	Disagree
4	Provides access to products that are cheaper	121	111	45	84	375	2.4	Disagree
5	Saves time in seeking for products in stores	193	103	39	26	375	3.06	Agree

Source: Field survey (2024)

Table 2.6 shows the gratifications the audience derive from social media advertising. From the weighted mean score provided, the highest score for the gratifications derived is that social media advertising saves time in seeking for products in stores of which the decision is Agreed. With a weighted mean score of 1.6 it is however, disagreed that social media advertising assures customers of product standard and authenticity.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one: What are the types of social media platforms commonly used for advertising by businesses in South-South, Nigeria?

Businesses in South-South, Nigeria mainly use Facebook and WhatsApp in advertising at a high extent. They also make use of Instagram, X and TikTok moderately. These advertisements are mostly presented in the forms of text and stories, photos, videos, and live videos accordingly.

The different social media platforms have their different areas where they are very effective and they are very important to interact directly with your customers in real time. It allows the business operators to answer questions quickly and efficiently while providing valuable insights into customer feedback on products or services. This study agrees with the study by Alashe (2021) where it was found that social media has had a very significant effect on marketing expenditure and that digital or social media platforms is increasingly affecting and changing our daily businesses. The study also agrees with the study by Rahim and Aziz (2023), where it is shown that social media is a well-liked and successful medium for advertising among consumers due to how quickly and cheaply advertising can be done. Social media has become an integral part of our lives, and as a result, it is also becoming an important marketing tool for businesses. That is why businesses use it in various ways to help them achieve their marketing aims. The central idea of the uses and gratifications theory is that people seek gratifications from their exposures so they continuously select those media options that have the strongest expectations for gratification (Edwards, 1998).

Alashe (2021) asserts that social media provides an interactive channel between the brand and the customer and also create room for suggestion. With the use of Facebook, business owners can boost their business productivity in the following ways: Post organic/paid text, photo, or video content; build Facebook groups; post Facebook stories and reels use Facebook ads; make contests and giveaways; use Facebook Messenger chatbots or auto-responders; and carry out influencer marketing campaigns. WhatsApp is a social media application which involves direct messaging as well as sharing media including voice messages, videos, and photos among others (Steele, 2014). Users of WhatsApp can form groups and exchange with each other an infinite number of pictures, videos, and audio messages (Barasa, 2014). According to studies, 72 percent of Instagram users said they made a purchase decision related to clothing, accessories, hair, and jewelry after seeing something on Instagram (Miller, 2020). Tiktok has the youngest user base and therefore attract customer segments who are particularly susceptible to this form of communication. Besides, a focus on entertainment makes it relatively easier to obtain a significant follower base even among users they have never met offline. It is an ideal place for influencer marketing and user-generated contents. However, it is relatively hard to develop customer's stickiness and brand loyalty. It's all about creativity of the short video, sometimes the contents can easily get neglected. X, formerly and colloquially known as Twitter, is a platform for users to share text messages, images, and videos as posts. Twitter is used as a news source, so there are less personal interactions. Also, the updates may be too fast for companies to catch and make use of them. On the other hand, it is famous for the "retweet", which can generate huge traffic. Also, connections on Twitter are triggered by content relevance.

Research question two: What are the gratifications derived from social media advertising by small and medium scale businesses in the south-south?

The gratifications derived from social media advertising by small and medium scale businesses are that it increases business visibility, improves brand awareness, improves audience engagement, improves relationship-building, and get customer insights of product. This is relevant to the customers because it gives provides them with relevant update on products to customer; it gives them access to a broad range of products difficult to search for from physical stores; and it saves time in seeking for products in stores. The gratifications derived from the use of these social media platforms are an important factor to selecting the appropriate social media that will suit the business offers. This reflects the tenets of the uses and gratifications theory. Edwards (1998) asserts that there are benefits that attract and hold audiences to diverse types of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological demands. The study by Rahim and Aziz (2023) shows that the uses of social media are for image sharing, and for social networking, however, both are incredibly successful in promoting goods. This study agrees with the study by Rahim and Aziz. Social media advertising enables small and medium scale businesses to promote their business, products or services across various social media platforms and increase brand awareness. Increasing your brand awareness has many benefits for a business. This study also agrees with the study by Alashe (2021) that found that social media has had a very significant effect on marketing expenditure, as it is increasingly affecting and changing our daily businesses and also it provides an interactive channel between the brand and the customer and also create room for suggestion.

Social media advertising offers a user-friendly platform and improves audience engagement. Engaging with customers on social media can help the business to develop a loyal customer base. Social media offers the opportunity to connect with the target audience and develop meaningful connections. Batra and Aaka (1998) assert that target audience is the recipient of advertising communication who uses information for decision-making purposes. Social media advertising can improve brand loyalty and turn one-time visitors into lifelong customers. Business owners can use social media advertising to share customer testimonials or case studies to demonstrate customer satisfaction. Using remarketing adverts on social media can further boost brand loyalty by making sure the products remain front-and-centre of customers' and website visitors' minds.

Research question three: What is the perception of advertisers on the usefulness of social media configurations for advertising?

The perception of business owners on the usefulness of social media configurations for advertising is that it helps them in targeting specific customers and groups; it eases audience engagement on the platform; it helps to measure and assess audience engagement; and it enables in personalization their business pages.

Social media configurations involve creating and optimizing social media profiles with accurate information, appealing visuals, and relevant keywords to attract and inform potential followers. Social media configurations for advertising enable businesses to set social media handles in ways that can interact with users and enhance user experience. Business owners can use the social media configurations to establish interaction patterns for social media and drive user interface designs and information architectures in social context for optimal use.

Social media configurations involve optimising tools for efficiency and effectiveness. It requires optimizing automation tools and data analytics platforms, the technology can help businesses streamline processes, target their audience more precisely, and measure campaign performance with greater accuracy. By incorporating these trends into their configuration, the businesses can maximise their return on investment and drive better results (Mars, 2024). This study therefore agrees with the study by Majinda (2019) where it was found that performance expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions all have a crucial positive effect in their relationship with expectation to use Facebook marketing.

The way a business presents itself on social media is very important, whether we are businesses looking to engage customers or individuals want to interact professionally. Setting up social media configurations should not just be seen as a formality because it is necessary step in creating a strong online identity. Our online appearance frequently serves as the first impression in the modern digital world. Businesses can boost the chances that more people will see their pages by improving their profiles and optimizing the engine search. This can greatly increase their reach and visibility, which is crucial for businesses growth. However, despite the fact that in social networking people can write blogs or discuss anything, social media does not allow users to manipulate comments, correct errors or other data for personal or business benefit (Bedell, 2010; Cohen, 2009).

With social media configurations, business can monitor and analyse the performance of their social media advertisements through metrics like reach, engagement, clicks, conversions, and more. This data helps in refining and optimizing your strategy. Social media marketing, monitoring, and analytics tools can help brands identify the trends and customer sentiment to better track and understand their audience. This means that the businesses can configure their social media platforms to suit their desires just as the uses and gratification theory purports. They have to ensure that the configurations are set in a way that can accommodate a wide range of users to increase audience engagement.

CONCLUSION

Social media platforms used for advertising by the businesses in South-South, Nigeria offers effective interactive tools useful to interface with customers using innovative techniques to connect businesses to consumers. A lot of businesses in South-South, Nigeria use the social media platforms for advertising to achieve several purposes, while social media configurations for advertising enable businesses to set social media handles in ways that can interact with users and enhance user experience. It is important that businesses should be proficient with the use of the tools for the benefits to be maximized.

Social media offers a user-friendly platform and improves audience engagement which businesses can utilize to its utmost. As technologies advance business owners must address the changing needs of social media audiences and facilitate users' better advantage of everything social media has to offer. It is important for businesses to keep up with marketing trends on social media. This should be considered as a strategic imperative for the businesses so that they can thrive in today's digital first world. Businesses owners and advertisers need to stay updated with digital marketing trends, learn to adapt to evolving strategies and technologies for their overall marketing effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Business advertisers should evaluate advertising by tracking leads to identify the number of people converted from prospective consumers to buyers by the marketing channels so as to know what social media platforms to put in more efforts.
2. Business owners should leverage the advantages and peculiarities of the different social media platforms and create engaging advertising content to keep their followers interested.
3. Business owners should research, monitor and gather feedback from customers so as to get insights into their preferences, pain points, and satisfaction levels which will be useful in determining social media set up and optimization.

REFERENCES

- Alashe, A. O. (2021). Influence of social media and marketing on corporate performance of financial institutes: An analysis on selected companies in Nigeria. <https://acikerisim.gelisim.edu.tr/xmlui/handle/11363/3324>
- Alhabash, S., Mundel, J. & Hussain, S. A. (2019). Social media advertising: Unraveling the mystery box. <https://www.infogov.social.media.advertising.unraveling.the.mystery.box>.
- Arsath, M. (2018). Social media marketing: Advantages and disadvantages. *International Journal of Management*, 6(1), 152–158.
- Barasa, A. M. (2014). Social media as an effective advertising tool in Kenya. Masters thesis, School of journalism, the University of Nairobi.
- Basu, C. (2019). What are the tools of persuasion in advertising? <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/toolspersuasion-advertising-34381.html>
- Bedell, J. (2010). What is the difference between social media and social networking? <http://jasonbedell.com/what-is-the-difference-between-social-media-and-social-networking>
- Cho, C. Lee, J. & Tharp, M. (2001). Different forced-exposure levels to banner advertisements. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 41(4). DOI: 10.2501/JAR-41-4-45-56
- Edwards, T. (1998). Lyrics to the rhythm: The uses and gratifications of rap music for African American teenagers. Ph. D Thesis. Lexington, Ky.
- Ekwueme, A. C., Attah, C. & Okoro, N. (2018). Analysis of the use of social media advertising among selected online businesses in Nigeria. *Journal of Contemporary Social Research*, 3(1), 13-22.
- Godwin, B. U. (2019). An empirical analysis on effect of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour. Masters thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria,
- Gul, M. & Euchner, J. (2019). The new geography of innovation. *Research-Technology Management*, 62(6), 16-22.
- Harwood, J. (1999). Age identification, social identity, gratifications, and television viewing. *Journal of Broadcast and Electronic Media*, 43 (1), 123-130.

- Hoelzel M. (2014, November 13). The social-media advertising report: growth forecasts, market trends, and the rise of mobile. *Business Insider*. <http://www.businessinsider.com/social-media-advertising-industry-trends-2014-11>
- Hurrle, D. & Postatny, J. (2015). *Social media for scientific institutions: How to attract young academics by using social media as a marketing tool*. Berlin, Germany: Springer.
- Indeed Career Guide. (2022). What social media reach is and how it can help your marketing strategy. *Career development*. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/social-media-reach>
- Li, Y., Peng, Y., Zhang, Z., Wu, M., Xu, Q. & Yin, H. (2018). A deep dive into user display names across social networks. *Information Sciences*, 447, 186-204.
- Niazi, G. S. K. & Siddiqui, J. & Shah, B. A. & Hunjra, A. I. (2011). Effective advertising and its influence on consumer buying behavior. MPRA Paper, University Library of Munich, Germany.
- Majinda, C. (2019). Predicting intention and use of social media marketing: application of the unified theory of acceptance and usage of technology framework. Masters theses, University of Botswana.
- Ma, Y. & Noichangkid, P. (2011). Bored with Ads? A Study Investigating Attitude towards Social Media Advertising. Masters theses, Umeå University.
- Miller, D. (2020). *Social media marketing, 3 books in one: Excellent tricks to grow your business, Instagram Marketing to become a famous influencer, Tiktok and YouTube to make Viral Videos*. Dave Miller.
- Rahim, I. R. & Aziz, N. A. (2023). Use of Social Media for Advertising and Its Effectiveness, *ASSEHR*, 205–215. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-098-5_19
- Schneier, B. (2019). *We have root: Even more advice from Schneier on security*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sheth, J.N. & Sharma, A. (2005). International e-marketing: opportunities and issues. *International Marketing*, 22(6), 611-622.
- Scott, D. M. (2015). *The new rules of marketing and PR: How to use social media, online video, mobile applications, blogs, news releases, and viral marketing to reach buyers directly*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Shuen, A. (2008). *Web 2.0: A strategy guide: Business thinking and strategies behind successful Web 2.0 implementations*. Sebastopol: O'Reilly Media.
- Smith, E. G., Meurs, L. & Neijens, P. (2006). Effects of Advertising Likeability: A 10Year Perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 46(1). DOI: 10.2501/S0021849906060089
- Statista. (2020). Social network penetration worldwide from 2017 to 2025. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/260811/social-network-penetration-worldwide/>
- Steele, C. (2014, February 20). What is WhatsApp? An explainer. <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2453710,00.asp>